



## **Seeking Host Churches for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 2019**

The [Week of Prayer for Christian Unity](#) is an international initiative where Christians worldwide are reminded of Jesus' prayer for his disciples that "they may be one so that the world may believe" (John 17:21).

For the past two years, the Institute for Christian Unity and UniteBoston have partnered together to host Week of Prayer for Christian Unity gatherings. In 2017, there were nightly liturgically-oriented prayer and worship gatherings with churches from a variety of ethnicities, traditions, and geography. We also hosted a [large worship service on January 21st](#) in alignment with the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation, that had over 8 co-sponsors and was attended by over 800 people. In 2018, we focused on fellowship across our congregations, and hosted 7 dinners in different neighborhoods in alignment with the launch of UniteBoston's [neighborhood dinner initiative](#).

In 2019, the theme is "Justice, Only Justice, You Shall Pursue," (Deuteronomy 16:20) which was chosen by Christians in Indonesia. The motto of the nation of Indonesia is Bhineka Tunggal Ika (Unity in Diversity). The country of Indonesia is filled of people from different ethnic, language, and religious backgrounds, yet they live by the principle of "gotong royong," which is to live in solidarity and by collaboration. Indonesia has recently been experiencing economic growth and competition, which has led to corruption that infects politics and business. They chose this text in Deuteronomy to speak to their situation and needs to renew their commitment to God and the justice that God brings.

The drive towards competition and corruption that often leads towards systems of injustice is also very much present here in the Greater Boston area. This year's prayer service includes reflection on the recurring situations that bring divisions and conflicts and our calling as members of the body of Christ to pursue and embody justice.

## **Invitation to Host Prayer and Worship Gatherings**

We're looking for churches in Boston to host the evening gatherings and pastors who can commit to mobilizing their congregation to participate in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity includes a wide variety of churches from very different traditions, polity and theology, and while it can be challenging to come together, this is a crucial time to witness to the reconciling peace and justice found in our Christian faith.

Host churches have complete freedom to plan their night of prayer and worship. Required elements for the gatherings include prayer and worship, and the gathering should be focused on this year's theme. There are [liturgical worship resources](#) provided by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity centered around this year's theme that have been produced by a joint coalition of leaders from Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical traditions. The provided worship service emphasizes the importance of moving from our discourses about unity, justice and mercy to action and concrete commitment as to how we can embody God's justice and mercy in our personal lives and in the life of our Christian communities. The gospel text during the prayer service is Luke 4:14-21, and this text can be used as an alternative for the Deuteronomic text during your worship service.

We also encourage each community to "be themselves!" Each part of the body of Christ is unique and has something to bring to the whole. In planning your service, think about what you can do to help those who may not be familiar with your style or manner of Christian worship to learn and engage.

Gatherings should be from **7:00 to 8:00pm each night (no later than 8:30pm)**, followed by a time of **fellowship** to encourage building relationships across the Christian community (refreshments optional). In order to promote continuity from night to night, we're asking for you to set aside 5-10 minutes for our planning team to share about how the entire 7-day gathering is going.

To encourage collaboration, each congregation must co-host the gathering with at least one, and preferably several (3-5) other congregations or ministries. Some options for partnership include hosting by ethnic affinity, by geographic area, or with intentional diversity across Christian tradition.

## **Neighborhood Dinners**

During this week, UniteBoston will also be hosting neighborhood dinners in homes throughout the city to further localized conversation and prayer about our personal and congregational commitments to unity and justice. These will be hosted by UniteBoston's neighborhood dinner coordinators.

## **Get Involved!**

To join in this year's Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, email Kelly Fassett, [Kelly@uniteboston.com](mailto:Kelly@uniteboston.com) with your name, potential partnering congregations, and requested dates (January 18 to 25). The spots go quickly, so be sure to reply soon! Our committee will make a final decision about the schedule for the nightly gatherings.

Thank you for considering this opportunity and for your commitment to Christ's Church in Boston!